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Address Dr. JOHN S. WILSON, Columbus, Ga.

THE

SOUTHERN SOLDIER'S

HEALTH GUIDE.

BY JOHN STAINBACK WILSON, M. D.,

Author of "Woman's Home Book of Health"; Member of the  
Medical Association of the State of Georgia. &c., &c.

COLUMBUS, GA.:

DAILY SUN BOOK AND JOB OFFICE, OPPOSITE TEMPERANCE HALL.

1861.



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# THE SOUTHERN SOLDIER'S HEALTH GUIDE.

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## I.

### HEALTH AXIOMS.

More soldiers die of disease than of the sword. This is especially true of volunteer forces; it was exemplified in the late Mexican war, and is amply confirmed by the mortuary lists of every campaign in all countries.

THE REASON WHY.—Because, 1st, disease-producing causes are in constant operation, while the casualties of the battle field are only occasional. 2d. Large numbers who enter the army are not inured to the hardships and exposures of military life. 3d. Many volunteers are wanting in that native stamina and vital resistance which are necessary to enable them to "endure hardship as good soldiers." 4th. All the natural and circumstantial causes of disease are intensified and made active and operative by reckless or unavoidable violations of the Laws of Health, on the part of soldiers.

EXAMPLES.—Cleanliness is neglected; stimulants are too freely indulged in; the temperature of the body is not duly regarded; the food is often improper in quality, or excessive or deficient in quantity; the exercise is sometimes exhausting—at other times the powers are enfeebled from inaction; the hours of sleep are irregular and interrupted; the passions are too often allowed to riot in the wildest extravagancies of unrestrained licentiousness.

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## II.

### THE GENERAL LAWS OF HEALTH.

1. The air breathed must be pure.
2. The food must be adapted in quantity and quality to the climate and habits of life.

3. The drinks should be of proper temperatnre, and free from impurities and stimulating properties.

4. A uniform and comfortable temperature of the body should be preserved.

5. The exercise should be moderate and regular, rather than excessive and occasional.

6. The sleep should be abundant, and should be sought in the *night*.

7. The clothing should be sufficiently warm, and at the same time light and loose.

8. The skin should be kept clean.

9. The bowels should be evacuated at regular times, and the calls of nature should be promptly attended to.

10. Serenity and composure of mind, courage, hope, religious confidence, and all the cheerful elevating feelings, should be cultivated; while fear, grief, despair, and all the depressing passions, should be suppressed.

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### III.

## SPECIAL ADAPTATION OF HEALTH LAWS TO SOLDIER LIFE.

AIR.—Except in barracks and hospitals, soldiers are not as much exposed to impure air as civilians. On the "tented field" they inhale the pure air of heaven. But where numbers are congregated together, the atmosphere is very liable to become contaminated with various disease-producing agents; and when these are concentrated and confined, they give rise to typhus or camp fever, hospital gangrene or mortification, erysipelas, and a host of malignant diseases far more formidable and destructive to a brave army than rifled cannons and Northern Zouaves.

The deleterious effects of impure air are especially likely to be seen in a Southern climate, where the heat favors putrefaction, enfeebles the vital powers, and aggravates all inflammatory affections. It will be the duty of the medical officers to guard against the effects of heat, by giving strict attention to cleanliness and ventilation; and it is no part of my design to give them instructions on these points. I may, however, with

propriety insist on the importance of co-operation on the part of the soldiers, with their medical attendants, in their efforts to prevent disease, by scrupulous attention to cleanliness in and about the camps—by the speedy removal of all offensive and air-infecting agents, and by avoiding, as far as possible, the crowding together in close tents and barracks. Better to sleep in the open air, with no canopy but the heavens, than in a crowded room or tent. It is all a mistake that there is anything specially malignant in night air. Night air was made as much for human beings as day air; and as there is nothing to breathe at night but night air, the conclusion is plain that God intended that the one should be used as freely as the other. The time has been when tents were unknown, when brave and hardy men rested with the earth for a bed and the sky for a covering; and yet those men suffered far less from disease than our modern armies, and were able to conquer a world. There is nothing malignant or dangerous, then, in night air in itself. All that is necessary is to guard against the dampness of the air, and to prevent the too rapid escape of heat from the body, by having it well protected with a blanket.

**Food.**—As to food, it is often Hobson's choice with soldiers. Yet they should know how to make the best of what they have, and they should be guarded against those errors and excesses into which they are so liable to run. The rations of our Southern army will, in all probability, consist almost exclusively of pickled pork, bacon, sugar, coffee, and flour.

The pickled pork is detrimental to health on account of the excessive quantity of salt with which it is impregnated. It is well known that the long continued use of salt provisions is the cause of that miserable disease, scurvy; and there can be but little doubt that many skin diseases and inflammations of the internal organs may be traced to the same source. Again, fat pork and bacon are very objectionable on account of the large quantity of grease that enters into their composition. Grease, being a heat-generating and not a strength-giving agent, should enter sparingly into the dietary of a warm climate. Bacon and pork may and must be used by our Southern troops, in the absence of better food, but there should be a large admixture of cooling, laxative vegetables and fruits. On the whole, we have more reason to give thanks than

to complain that our enemies have cut off the bacon and pork. Tennessee and Kentucky (with our own home supply) will afford altogether as much as we should use; and a little shortening in the allowance of hog meat will, no doubt, be the means of saving many a Southern soldier's life.

The excess of salt in meat should be removed by boiling or soaking in water. Boiling not only abstracts the salt, but also much of the grease. Broiling is the most convenient mode of cooking in camp, and on the score of health, is far better than frying.

Fine flour is constipating, and therefore it should be used, as often as circumstances will permit, in conjunction with corn bread, fruits and vegetables. The ash-cake is the most wholesome form of bread, and is well suited to camp life.

Good ripe fruits and vegetables are highly conducive to health, and are peculiarly appropriate in a warm climate, on account of their cooling, laxative, and anti-inflammatory effects. Among the fruits and vegetables, water-melons, oranges, cucumbers, ripe peaches and apples, figs, and potatoes, are worthy of special notice. All the acid fruits tend to prevent scurvy; and the same may be said of potatoes. Water-melons act powerfully on the kidneys, and are good even in fevers. Cucumbers consist mostly of water, and contain but little nutriment, yet they are a valuable addition to the dietary of a warm climate. Fruits and vegetables should be in good condition when eaten—that is, they should not be green, or over-ripe and half rotten; and they should be used in moderation. The evils charged upon fruits have originated from excess—from their abuse rather than their proper use.

When there is an epidemic tendency to cholera and bowel affections, fruits and vegetables should be used more sparingly than they might otherwise be.

Rice is among the most wholesome and nutritious of all foods, and it should form a large part of the dietary of Southern soldiers. It is the best of all diets in looseness of the bowels, and in all cases where it is desirable to prevent or restrain excessive action of the bowels. Nine cases in ten of diarrhoea will yield to rest and an exclusive rice diet.

**DRINKS.**—The effects of all alcoholic drinks, when taken as a beverage, are evil—evil only, and that continually. The appa-



rent strength and animation imparted by them is fictitious and delusive, the transient and temporary excitement arising from their use being invariably and necessarily followed by a collapse and sinking of the vital powers below par. This is true of every form of drink of which alcohol is a constituent.

What shall I say, then, of those villainous conglomerations of logwood, strychnine, sugar of lead, etc., which are sold by camp followers? Why simply this: that those who sell such stuff should be compelled to drink it. This would soon put an end to the traffic, and save the lives of many soldiers who thoughtlessly swallow such poisons. And I may add, that no man who indulges freely in the use of any kind of alcoholic liquors will be likely to survive a protracted Southern campaign; and should he be so fortunate as to live through the war, he will return home a wreck in health and in morals, not to enjoy the fruits of his victories, but to fill an early grave.

As to coffee, it may be admissible, and sometimes beneficial, when taken in the morning and in moderate quantity; but as it is a stimulant with little or no nutriment, it should be regarded more as a medicine, to be used occasionally as a restorative, than as an ordinary beverage. We are told that General Scott said, "the too free use of strong coffee and oily meat (together with neglect of keeping the skin clean) cost many a soldier his life in Mexico." It is to be hoped that our soldiers will profit by the hint of the old General, and do nothing to aid him in his efforts to destroy the "rebels." After all, the best beverage is pure water. When water is impregnated with foreign elements, most of these can be removed by filtering it through sand. To keep water cool, put a wet cloth over the vessel containing it. Large draughts of cold water should not be taken when the body is overheated or exhausted.

**Clothing.**—The clothing of soldiers is generally too heavy, and too close-fitting for a warm climate. Our military uniforms are anything but favorable to those free and unrestrained movements so necessary to the comfort and efficiency of a soldier. All stocks, air-tight high and stiff hats, and tight-fitting clothing should be entirely discarded. It is to be hoped that the cumbersome English fashion of dressing soldiers will never be adopted by the Southern army, and I think that the proper authorities will show their independence and good sense by

providing the regular army with clothing light, loose, and easy-fitting. The best dress for a Southern soldier is a loose hunting shirt, or short sack, over loosely-flowing sailors' trowsers. The feet should be protected by thick leather boots or shoes, and the head should be covered with a light-colored soft felt hat. The hat should be sufficiently high to allow a free circulation of air over the brain, and ventilation should be secured by having little windows cut in the sides of the crown. To guard against sun-stroke and over-heating of the head when exposed to the sun, place a wet handkerchief or sponge in the hat, and on the top of the head. "All bright-colored scarfs, belts, sashes, badges, stripes, bands, caps, etc., that may serve to direct the enemy's aim, should be utterly discarded in the uniforms of men in actual service. They may answer on a holiday parade, but never in the field of battle. On the contrary, the uniforms should be plain, the colors subdued, and nothing exhibited that can at all serve to insure a closer, deadlier aim." On that important part of a soldier's equipage, the blanket, I copy the advice of "An Old Soldier": "Line your blanket with one thickness of brown drilling. This adds but four ounces in weight, and doubles the warmth. Buy a small India rubber blanket (only \$1 50) to lay on the ground or throw over your shoulders, when on guard duty, during a rain storm. Most of the Eastern troops are provided with these. Straw to lie on is not always to be had." The advice is good; and though there may be some difficulty in getting the India rubber just now, the present state of things cannot long continue, and it would be well to bear in mind what the "Old Soldier" says.

In the absence of India rubber blankets or straw to lie upon, skins, planks, boxes, or something of the kind, should be placed under the body while sleeping on the ground, so as to guard against the chilling effects of the damp earth. As to the dangers of getting wet, they are very much exaggerated. There is but little to fear while the body is kept in motion. The danger arises after exercise ceases, and when the body is exhausted. A soldier may march all day in wet clothes without the least injury. But when the day's labors are over, dry clothing should be put on, if possible. If this cannot be done, a dry blanket or over-coat should be thrown over the wet clothes until they become dry.

**EXERCISE.**—In an active military campaign, there is but little danger that the body will suffer for the want of exercise. But while in camp, the exercise should be as regular as possible, so that the soldier may be prepared for the fatigues of forced marches, and the hardships of the field. When the body is exhausted, rest should be sought, but only so much as is necessary to recuperate—beyond this, inaction tends to diminish the powers of endurance and unfit for active labor. By moderate daily training the strength and vital resistance may be vastly increased.

**SLEEP.**—As in eating, so in sleeping—the soldier must take it when, how, and where he can. Yet it should not be forgotten that night was ordained for sleep. Day sleep is not a full and sufficient substitute for night sleep. It may often be necessary and proper to make up for unavoidable loss of rest at night, by sleeping in the day, but the law of nature should be observed as far as possible. Obedience in this respect will, of course, prevent the keeping of late hours with those soul-and-body-destroying dissipations and “teeming mischiefs” to which a camp life is so much exposed.

**BATHING.**—Cleanliness may well be ranked among the cardinal virtues. But like its kindred virtues, it is very likely to be neglected in military life.

Frequent bathing is the most effectual preventive of skin diseases, the various forms of fever, bowel complaints, and all kinds of congestive and inflammatory affections. Bathing is highly useful in guarding against “colds” from getting wet and from sudden changes of weather. When it is not convenient to bathe the whole body, the chest, neck and arms should be wet every morning in cold water, following this by active friction with a coarse towel. This can be done in any place where a quart of water can be had. Cold water is tonic and invigorating, and is particularly useful in a warm climate by counteracting the relaxing and debilitating effects of heat. The cold bath should not be taken when the body is fatigued, nor immediately after a meal. Exercise, even to the perspiring point, is a good preparation for the cold bath, *provided there is no exhaustion or fatigue*. Early in the morning is the best and most convenient time for bathing.

**REGULATION OF THE PASSIONS.**—In such a work as this, I can only say that the passions are divided into two great classes—

the *deviating* and the *depressing*. Among the former may be mentioned love, (including love of country), veneration, faith and hope. Fear, grief, remorse, etc., belong to the latter class. Upon the proper exercise and direction of the passions depend our happiness, and, to a large extent, our health. With fear, it may be presumed that our Southern soldiers have nothing to do, when their native bravery is warmed by the inspiration of a just and holy cause, and while contending for all that is dear to the human heart, and sacred in the sight of Heaven. In a righteous cause there is no place for fear, grief, remorse, and the gloomy train of depressing passions. But soldiers removed as they are from the restraints of civil life, are in danger of indulging those licentious animal propensities which too often ruin both health and morals.

The dangers from this source can be guarded against only by the restraints of religion, by remembering the instructions of home, and by stern resistance to the evils and temptations of camp life.

**COOLING OFF.**—After active exercise, the coat should always be put on again, if it has been taken off. It is not prudent to sit on the damp ground while resting, and when weary.

**CARE OF THE FEET.**—Blistered feet should be bathed in cold water, and then a plaster made of hog's lard, worked up with finely-powdered chalk or flour, should be applied. It is said that rubbing soap into the socks will prevent blistering. Corns should be well soaked in warm water, closely trimmed, and then one or two wafers should be placed on them. The feet should be bathed every morning in cold water to harden the skin, allay and prevent irritation, and guard against cold. A cold foot bath every morning is the best of all remedies for cold feet, and the best preventive of "colds" and internal congestions.

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#### IV.

### ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES.

**BLEEDING.**—When an artery is wounded, the blood is bright red, and escapes in jets or spirts with the beating of the heart.

To check the bleeding, pass a handkerchief or suspender

around the limb, and *between the wound and the heart*, run a bayonet or ram-rod under the band or handkerchief, and then twist it until the bleeding stops.

*Bleeding from a vein* may be stopped by closing the wound with the fingers, or by "tying it up."

POISONED WOUNDS.—Apply a band as above, and suck out the poison with a quill, or with the mouth.

SPRAINS.—Lie down, keep the limb at rest, and cover the injured part with a thin cloth, wet in cold water.

FAINTING.—Place the patient full length on the ground, with the head as low or lower than the body, loose all tight clothing, and dash cold water in the face.

DROWNING.—Throw blankets around the patient, place him in a sitting position, clear the mucus from the mouth, hold the nose, suck out the foul air with a tube, and then blow in fresh air. Rub the feet and legs with the hands, or with dry sand.

SUN-STROKE.—Rest, cold to the head, and warmth and friction to the feet.

SUDDEN DEATH.—When this occurs without manifest cause, treat as in drowning.





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This work is now ready for the press, and will be published as soon as the war is over. Orders have already been received from all parts of the South. Those desiring early copies, will send their names to the author, so that they may be supplied as soon as the work is issued.

Address

Dr. JOHN S. WILSON,  
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